

Remarks

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 15, 21-24, and 29, objected to claims 2-8, 16-20, and 25-28, and allowed claims 9-14. Claims 15 and 22 have been amended. Claims 27 and 28 have been canceled. Claims 1-26 and 29 remain in the application.

The Examiner rejected claim 1 under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by Horton (US 5,921,379). The rejection is traversed.

In rejecting claim 1, the Examiner stated that Horton shows all the structure of claim 1. For example, the Examiner notes that "[a]s can be seen in Fig. 4A [of Horton], the beam has a greater thickness in the middle of the row than at the first and second side edges." MPEP § 2131 provides: "A claim is anticipated only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described, in a single prior art reference." *Verdegaal Bros. v. Union Oil Co. of California*, 814 F.2d 628, 631, 2 USPQ2d 1051, 1053 (Fed. Cir. 1987). Contrary to the Examiner's statement that Horton shows all the claimed structure, Horton does not disclose a central beam having a thickness at the middle of the row greater than at the first and second side edges. The Examiner has mistakenly characterized the conveying surface 78 of Horton as a beam. But the conveying surface 78 of Horton is a relatively thin webbing at the top surface of the module, as clearly shown in FIGS. 3B and 4B of Horton. If there is a beam shown in Horton, it is formed by the offset and oblique connecting members 74, 75, 76. But there is no disclosure that the connecting members of Horton form a beam having a greater thickness at the

middle of the row than at the first and second side edges. Therefore, the rejection of claim 1 is unsupported by the art and should be withdrawn.

The Examiner rejected claims 15, 21, 23-24, and 29 under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by Spangler et al. (US 5,174,439), but merely objected to claims 16-20 and 25-28, dependent from claim 15. Claim 15 has been amended to incorporate the elements of original objected-to dependent claim 28, which has been canceled. Claim 27 has been canceled as redundant. The 102(b) rejection of claims 15-26 and 29 is overcome.

The Examiner rejected claim 22 under 35 USC § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to point out and distinctly claim the subject matter applicants regard as the invention. In particular, the Examiner points out that claim 22 recites the limitation, "the linear portion," for which there is no antecedent basis. Claim 22 has been amended to remove "the linear portion" and to insert "a middle region of the row." This language is the same as that used in claim 16, indicated previously as having allowable subject matter. The 112 rejection should be withdrawn.

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the rejection of claims 1, 15, 21-24, and 29 and allowance of those claims and objected-to dependent claims 2-8, 16-20, and 25-26, along with already allowed claims 9-14, in view of the remarks and amendments.

This amendment is being sent within three months of the Office Action so no extension of time petition fee should be due. Authorization to charge any fees deemed necessary for

consideration of this response to Deposit Account No. 12-0090 is hereby given. If the Examiner thinks a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, he is invited to call the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,
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